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By *ADAM FITZ-ADAM.*

To be continued every THURSDAY.

THURSDAY, *March* the 22d, 1753.

To Mr. *FITZ-ADAM.*

SIR,

IT is a great abuſe of language, according to Mr. Locke, to make uſe of words to which we have no fixed and determinate ideas. There is a a ſtill greater, Mr. Fitz-Adam, which is the almoſt-continually uſing words to which we have no ideas at all. I ſhall only inſtance in the poor monoſyllable TASTE. Who has not heard it frequently pronounced by the loveliеſt mouths in the world, when it has evidently meant nothing?

I WOULD not be thought to require, like an ill-bred logician, that every pretty woman, or even every pretty man, who makes uſe of the word TASTE,

TASTE, ſhould define what they mean by it; that would be too cruel; but I ſhould rather chuſe, when they are really conſcious to themſelves that they are going to utter it without any idea annexed, that they would be ſo good as to change it for the word WHIM. However, as my recommendation will, I am ſure, have no weight, unleſs it ſhould be backed by your cenſorial authority, I ſhall leave them at preſent in the full poſſeſſion of their favourite word, and proceed to the ſubject of my letter.

YOU rallied very humorouſly, a few weeks ago, ſome of the reigning follies of this various iſland under the name of our approaches to nature. I hope you have likewiſe taken notice how deſirous we are of returning to our primæval ignorance under the notion of TASTE. A name which we are fond of giving to every new folly which ſtarts up, and to every old exploded abſurdity which we are charitably pleaſed to revive. Let but that commanding word go forth, and on camelion catches his colours quicker than we are ready to imbibe follies from each other. Whereas TASTE, in my opinion, ought to be applied to nothing but what has as ſtrict rules annexed to it, though perhaps imperceptible by the vulgar, as Ariſtotle, among the critics, would require, or Domenichino, among the painters, practice. People may have whims, freaks, caprices, perſuaſions, and even ſecond ſights if they pleaſe, but they can have no TASTE which has not its foundation in nature, and which, conſequently, may be accounted for.

FROM a thouſand inſtances of our imitative inclinations I ſhall ſelect one or two, which have been, and ſtill are, notorious and general. A few years ago every thing was Gothic; our houſes, our beds, our book-caſes, and

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our couches were all copied from ſome parts or other of our old cathedrals. The Grecian architecture, where, as Dryden ſays,

Firm Doric *pillars found the ſolid baſe,*
The gay Corinthian *holds the higher ſpace,*
And all below is ſtrength, and all above is grace,

that architecture, which was taught by nature and poliſhed by the graces, was totally neglected. Tricks and conceits got poſſeſſion every where. Clumſy buttreſſes were to ſhock you with diſproportion; or little pillars were to ſupport vaſt weights; while ignorant people, who knew nothing of centers of gravity, were to tremble at their entrance into every building, leſt the roof ſhould fall upon their heads. This, however odd it might ſeem, and however unworthy of the name of TASTE, was cultivated, was admired, and ſtill has its profeſſors in different parts of England. There is ſomething, they ſay, in it congenial to our old Gothic conſtitution; I ſhould rather think to our modern idea of liberty, which allows every one the privilege of playing the fool, and of making himſelf ridiculous in whatever way he pleaſes.

ACCORDING to the preſent prevailing whim every thing is Chineſe, or in the Chineſe taſte; or, as it is ſometimes more modeſtly expreſſed, *partly after the Chineſe manner*. Chairs, tables, chimney-pieces, frames for looking-glaſſes, and even our moſt vulgar utenſils are all reduced to this new-fangled ſtandard; and without doors ſo univerſally has it ſpread, that every gate to a cow-yard is in T's and Z's, and every hovel for the cows has bells hanging at the corners.

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THE good people in the city are, I perceive, ſtruck with this novelty; and though ſome of them ſtill retain the laſt faſhion, the Gothic, yet others have begun to ornament the doors and windows of their ſhops with the more modern improvements.

HAD this taſte prevailed in the latter end of queen Anne's time, the new churches themſelves had doubtleſs been pagoda's; nay, it is expected at preſent that the Something which is riſing on the building at the horſe-guards, if ever it ſhould come to a concluſion, will terminate at laſt *partly after the Chineſe manner*.

I WOULD beg leave, however, to propoſe, if our large public buildings are to be executed after Chineſe models, that we ſhould purſue the uſual methods on ſuch occaſions. The inoculation for the ſmall-pox, and other ſuch hazardous experiments, were firſt executed upon condemned criminals. And, in my opinion, an experiment of this kind ſhould firſt be tried on an hoſpital, or a county work-houſe. I know it will be ſaid in anſwer to this, that conveniency is chiefly to be ſtudied in edifices of charity; but is conveniency to give way to TASTE? Is the honour of a nation to be leſs conſidered than the particular exigencies of private perſons? It is a thouſand pities that the hoſpitals of Chelſea and of Greenwich are already built; their ſituations are the very ſpots one would have choſen for a trial of this ſort. What numbers of little lakes might have been let in from the Thames to wander among the pavilions? And how commodiouſly might we have paſſed from ward to ward by bridges adorned with triumphal arches?

THE encouragement of this taſte may be worthy of the conſideration of thoſe gentlemen who have great poſſeſſions in the iſle of Ely, or the fens of Lincolnſhire.

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A Chineſe town, happily ſituated, may attract inhabitants, and make eſtates in thoſe countries extremely deſirable. Marſhy grounds, which are now avoided, will become by this means the moſt ſought after of any, and we may live to ſee the hundreds of Eſſex crouded with villa's. But I only hint theſe things to thoſe whom they concern, and whoſe intereſt it may be to purſue them farther. My intention you perceive is to make TASTE uſeful to ſomebody at leaſt, and to aſſign proper places for the exerciſe of our improved talents.

BUT while I am promoting the intereſt and entertainment of ſome of his majeſty's ſubjects, I would not wilfully offend others, who may be a little infatuated through their zeal to their country. Many good patriots have been greatly alarmed at the ſpreading of the French language and the French faſhions ſo univerſally over Europe; and have apprehended, perhaps too juſtly, that their modes of religion and of government might inſinuate themſelves in their turns. If any pious Engliſhman ſhould have the ſame fears with regard to the Chineſe cuſtoms and manners, I have the ſatisfaction to inform him that nothing of that kind can reaſonably be dreaded. We may reſt ſecure that our firm faith will never be ſtaggered by the tenets of Fohi, nor our practice vitiated by the morals of Confucius; at leaſt we may be certain that the preſent innovations are by no means adequate to ſuch an effect: for on a moderate computation not one in a thouſand of all the ſtiles, gates, rails, pales, chairs, temples, chimney-pieces, &c. &c. &c. which are called Chineſe, has the leaſt reſemblance to any thing that China ever ſaw; nor would an Engliſh church be a leſs uncommon ſight to a travelling mandarin than an Engliſh pagoda. I think it neceſſary to ſay thus